DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 038 912 HE 001 457

AUTHOR	Clark, Kenneth E.
TITLE	Will Improved Skill in Teaching be Recognized?
INSTITUTION	American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	4 Mar 70
NOTE	10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Education Research Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 4, 1970
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60
DESCRIPTORS	*College Teachers, *Effective Teaching, *Higher Education, *Teacher Evaluation, Teaching, *Teaching Quality, Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

Although there is now great interest in the improvement of teaching in colleges and universities, merit as judged in these institutions is based much more on the evaluation of scholarly and research activities than on teaching performance, and salaries are determined by the reputation of one's work rather than one's teaching. One's writing can be quite easily evaluated, one's teaching supposedly not. Yet student use of questionnaires on a teacher's effectiveness, or visitation of classes by colleagues could provide excellent information about the teacher's qualities in the classroom. There is great need for a clearing house of information about good teachers and the development of a system for identifying good and poor teachers on a campus. This could be done if a number of institutions banded together and used a national metric system or similar device to collect information, and provide indices of evaluation. This would allow for a teaching effectiveness number to be added to the teacher's dossier, and teaching ability would thus become another factor to be considered in salary increases or recruitment. (AF)

ED038912

AERA Convention
Minneapolis, Minnesota
March 4, 1970

WILL IMPROVED SKILL IN TEACHING BE RECOGNIZED?

Kenneth E. Clark
University of Rochester

The preceding speakers have outlined in detail effective programs for the improvement in the quality of teaching in colleges and universities. As I listened to the description of these programs, the issue assigned to me for discussion became more and more critical, namely, is it really to the advantage of faculty members and graduate students to work to improve the quality of their classroom teaching?

The prestigious colleges and universities to which young faculty members aspire vary greatly in their salary ranges both within and between ranks. The advantage of moving from a less well-known to a better-known institution is partly due to salary inducements of the moment, but more importantly because one can foresee a greater likelihood of salaries in the upper ranges. The bright young person who aspires to the good life and to invitations from these higher paying institutions is sensitive to the system by which persons are attracted to positions in the better paying schools. I believe I am not revealing any secrets in higher education if I suggest that merit as judged in the colleges and universities around the country today is based much more on the evaluation of one's scholarly and research activities than on one's teaching performance. Unhappily, in those institutions where teaching is the major function and where research and scholarly work is not mandatory for advancement, salaries are much more likely to be based on seniority than upon merit.

HE001457

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

My advice to a young faculty member is that he must publish. His visibility around the country will be enhanced far more by the articles he writes in the best journals and by the books that he gets published by the best publishers than by any applause that he gets from students in his classroom. A letter of praise from a reviewing editor of an important journal will get much more attention than a letter signed by many students in the professor's class, whether they are for him or against him. In fact, the glow of a good review may even brighten up a miserable student evaluation.

We all know that this is the belief about the way in which the system works. I can give you more than belief. In a national survey of the scientific contributions made by psychologists, an elaborate procedure for determining the eminence of psychology was developed, the ultimate criterion of eminence (the judgment of one's publishing peers) had its highest correlation with the number of times a person's work was cited by others in the research literature. Almost as high was the correlation between the judgment of his eminence and the salary he earned if his employment was in higher education. What that says is that salaries earned by college professors in psychology are not determined by length of service in institutions, the quality of teaching in that institution, which institution employs you, or the degree of service that you provide to that local institution. Rather, salaries are determined by the reputation of your work held by persons scattered around the country. In order to succeed young faculty members must consider this fact of life as they plan their expenditure of time on a college campus.

One might say that there are other ways to attain eminence in a field, and that a person may prove himself to be quite useful serving on committees and boards of national associations, and on visiting committees so that even though he does not publish he may nonetheless receive a great deal of acclaim. I regret to report to you that in my own study of psychologists another very important high correlate of eminence, i.e., the judgment of one's publishing peers, was the number of boards a person served on in the American Psychological Association. In other words, there is one central component to success in psychology, and that component is research productivity.

I do not mean to suggest by this that the total number of articles is by any means an accurate index of quality and success. Quite to the contrary. Those persons who published a great deal frequently received no votes at all, sometimes not even their own votes. There is ample evidence that a large amount of the published literature is a disservice to the writer, because it exposes his weaknesses rather than calling attention to his strengths. As you can see I am not drumming up the old publish or perish syndrome as the disease which kills quality teaching. Instead I believe that publication exposes you to a larger audience of judges than merely the persons on your own campus. In this exposure, if you are good, you develop contacts outside of the campus. These contacts enable you to improve your marketability. You do get offers as a result of work of this sort. Those offers enable you either to improve your economic status at home, or to move to another institution where the desired economic objective is attained.

That it is the writing that accomplishes this is quite clear if one examines the letters of recommendation distributed around the country as people are recruited and as decisions are made about promotion and tenure. These letters emphasize the evaluation of the written work of an investigator. They may indicate that his written work is not very good. But they do cite objective evidence based upon that written material. Unfortunately, it is true that teaching is seldom mentioned. But when it is, characteristically the remarks are based on no hard evidence whatsoever. They may state: "He must be a good teacher because...," or "I would assume that he is a good teacher...," or "I have no knowledge of his teaching qualities but I assume you can judge that better than I."

One might insist that the same sort of generalizations can be made about administrative skills and about qualities of persons in management positions. Yet this is not quite the same thing. For one thing, an individual's managerial skills may be associated with his intimate knowledge of a given organization, so that he is not easily transferable from one place to another. Also, there is clear evidence that information of this sort does get communicated, and that persons are moved from one place to another on the basis of substantial amounts of information about their qualities. It is commonly remarked that John Gardner and the Carnegie Corporation for many years played a key role in the identification of those persons who became presidents of large numbers of colleges and universities. The American Council on Education has played a similar role. The interesting report of Frederick D. Bolman now of the Esso Education Foundation, on the way in which college presidents are selected,

indicates that it is possible to develop quite complete dossiers on persons in which a major component is the administrative or organizational skills of an individual.

One might well ask why there are no similar clearing houses for outstanding teachers. Is this because we find it necessary to recognize that there is merit in good teaching, but also find it unnecessary to reward good teaching? Or is it that when one recruits for a new faculty person, he does not place the quality of that person's teaching at the top of his list?

An easy reply is that teaching is very difficult to assess, and that therefore one could not expect any exchange to provide anything particularly useful. My response to that is nonsense! We know a great deal about the quality of teaching of individual faculty members on our own campuses. If we do not we can obtain this information very easily.

The use of classroom questionnaires by students will give us satisfactory measures of the teaching effectiveness of our colleagues. We can identify those who are clearly outstanding, and we can identify those who are clearly deficient. We can discover those members of the faculty who neglect their teaching responsibilities and those who devote a very high proportion of their energies towards the improved education of their students. The assessment of teaching turns out to be in many ways far easier than the assessment of qualities of leadership desired in deans, vice-presidents, and presidents. If the existence of a university or college depended totally on highly competent teachers, we would have no difficulty in identifying those who could no longer serve our colleges and universities.

If you object to the use of student opinion in determining the careers of faculty, I can suggest an equally useful procedure for assessing competence in teaching. That is the visitation of classes by colleagues. Admittedly, this is not a routine or traditional pattern, and it is also clear that when a fellow faculty member visits a class the classroom will not quite be the same. However, a modest investment of time, surely no greater than that required to collect the opinions of others about his writings or his skills in a laboratory, could provide excellent information about his qualities in the classroom.

Should we desire to evaluate faculty performance in terms of the ultimate criterion, namely the learning of students, we could probably accomplish that as well. Our problem here, however, is that we have not quite decided what the objectives of higher education are, and so we cannot determine the degree to which an individual faculty member has succeeded in attaining these objectives. If we are willing to admit that military service schools have some idea about what it is they are trying to teach, then what we can say is that the military service schools have found a significant positive correlation between the learning of students and the ratings given by students of their instructors.

We have not developed a clearing house of information about good teachers and have not developed a good system for identifying good and poor teachers on a campus, because we really do not believe that this is such an important thing. I believe we all operate on the assumption that the good scholar is what we want in a colleague. Only if he is abysmally poor in the classroom will we raise any questions about teaching

performance as part of our evaluation of him. Until this overall attitude about the importance of good teaching changes, I believe that the sorts of programs just described, regardless of their merit, will not catch hold, and that we will not see widespread efforts to help people learn how to teach better and to sort out those who are incapable of learning how to teach.

I see no easy way out of this dilemma. Our students are helping us by jogging our consciences on this matter. I believe we can make some progress in this area if we will commit ourselves consistently to efforts to evaluate the quality of teaching by one device or another. If we consistently record such information in some form where it is accessible to persons not on a given campus, we may ultimately develop the same sort of reservoir of information about quality in teaching that we have developed in terms of quality of administrative talent. I believe that if this product were developed it would sell. By product, I mean realistic and objective estimates of quality of teaching. By sell, I mean that such information would move persons to the head of the line in various places when recruiting of new faculty goes on, and that this objective information would be fed into the systems of reward in terms of salary.

Not only is there need for a national campaign for the collection of greater amounts of information about the quality of classroom teaching, there is also the necessity for the development of a national metric which would be understood and used. One great advantage of the College Boards is that after a while everybody learns what 500 is and that 800

is pretty good and that 300 is not very spectacular. The advantage of the IQ was that everybody knew what was meant by an IQ of 140. The grade point average is generally standardized so that it becomes easily understood not only in one's own institution but elsewhere. We have no similar uniform measure for classroom teaching competence. Likewise, we have no agency like the College Entrance Examination Board that accepts the responsibility for developing devices and standardizing scores so that they may be easily interpreted. We might serve our most useful function in the improvement of teaching if a number of institutions banded together to use an identical device to collect information in precisely the same way, and to provide indices of evaluation that employ the same metric. If we did that, we would then have a number to add in to all of the other evidence that goes along with an individual faculty member's dossier.

The mere existence of such a number would have a profound influence on judgmental processes of potential employers and of current employers. Studies of the factors involved in appointing National Science Foundation Fellows show that regardless of the instructions to panels the numerical scores on tests weigh heavily in the overall decision processes. We all know that there are many institutions that disclaim any attention to College Board scores in the admission of new freshmen. Yet when the freshman class is finally selected that particular institution has a student body clustered closely about the very scores to which they were presumably paying little attention. The existence of a summary number that indicated something about an individual's teaching abilities would

force itself into the judgmental processes in terms of salary increases, tenure, and recruitment of persons from other institutions to a greater extent than we would predict today as we view with dismay and depression the degree to which excellence in college teaching tends to be ignored in the reward systems in higher education.

I do not argue that we should attend only to quality in teaching. Obviously we will always try to discover characteristics which would point to likely growth of an individual in the future and we will need precise methods of determining whether he is peculiarly clever in his area of specialization. To do this will require the continued examination of a man's writings and his other activities. But today we are attending only to that aspect of the individual's qualities, and have set up a system in which his efforts to make the quality of his teaching excellent or to improve the way in which he guides the learning of students often serves as a disadvantage to him in his career. I would like to see the development of a system in which excellence in teaching can be as easy a channel for recognition and reward as research and writing.

As educational researchers we would find a number of interesting challenges if we went to work to develop a metric of the sort I have described. We might find, for example, that teaching competence is not unidimensional, but rather that it has a variety of important components relatively independent of each other. It may be, for example, that the charm and charisma of a faculty member interferes with learning and that while it is adored, it may actually be undesirable. It may be that the instructor who spends his class time primarily in explanation of details

to help students organize materials may be a useful person in some areas of study but interferes with the necessary organizational activities of the students themselves. It may be that instructors in mathematics must have entirely different qualities than instructors in philosophy or instructors in history. It may be that a person who is in a laboratory science needs to have a quite different pattern of qualities than a person who is teaching languages. All of these areas of investigation would be pursued with vigor if we ever developed a system in which knowing a person's characteristics in teaching was essential to determining his likely future in higher education.

I am firmly of the belief that quality of teaching can be measured and that excellence in teaching must be rewarded if we are to expect faculty members to give this important activity its proper due.